

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJ: US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS

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1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL, THE BAHAMAS HAS NEVER MAINTAINED A MILITARY FORCE, BUT IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN CREATING THE BAHAMAS DEFENSE FORCE (BDF) WHICH WILL CORRESPOND IN FUNCTION TO THE USCG. THE BDF LEGISLATION HAS YET TO BE INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE LEGISLATION WILL PASS. SECONDERED RAYAL NAVY OFFICERS ARE IN PLACE TO RUN THE BDF, THE FIRST 23 RECRUITS HAVE BEEN TRAINED, 3 BAHAMIAN MIDSHIPMENT ARE AT DARTMOUTH, AND ADDITIONAL PATROL BOATS ARE ON THE WAY FROM VOSPER THORNYCRAFT.

2. EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON QUESTIONS ASKED PARA 2 OF REFTEL FOLLOW: A. WHILE THE BDF IS NOT LIKELY TO EXERCISE MAJOR POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE SHORT TERM, IF EVER, IT WILL SERVE INCREASINGLY AS AN AVENUE OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH IMPORTANT AND USEFUL ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GCOB. ADDITIONALLY, THE BDF WILL ASSUME MOST OF THE ENFORCEMENT AND PATROL FUNCTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG/CONTRABAND, AND ILLEGAL
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ALIEN INTERDICTION AND FISHERY AND SEABED RESOURCE CONTROL NOW PERFORMED BY THE POLICE FORCE, AS WELL AS THE SEARCH AND RESCUE FUNCTION NOW PERFORMED BY USCG AND BAHAMAS AIR SEA RESCUE ASSOCIATION (A VOLUNTEER GROUP SIMILAR TO USCG AUXILLIARY). SINCE THESE ARE CURRENTLY GROWING PROBLEM AREAS WHICH WE NOW SHARE WITH THE GCOB CONTINUED AND EXPANDING TIES WITH THE BDF ARE CONSIDERED MOST IMPORTANT

BY THE EMBASSY.

B. THE CURRENT STATE OF USG, U.S. MILITARY AND INDIVIDUAL U.S. SERVICE RELATIONS WITH THE BDF IS, IN OUR OPINION, OUTSTANDING THOUGH, AT PRESENT, THESE RELATIONS ARE BASED PRIMARILY ON THE INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES INVOLVED AND THE TRADITIONAL ROYAL NAVY VIEW OF RAPPORT AND COMMON INTERESTS WITH USN AND USG. THE BAHAMIANS, IN GENERAL, AND THE BDF APPEAR TO HAVE A HIGH REGARD FOR US UNIFORMED SERVICES AND A SINCERE DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CLOSE ASSOCIATION AND COOPERATION ON A BASIS OF EQUALITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT.

C. NEAR AND MID-TERM ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO MEET THE MUTUAL NEEDS OF THE US MILITARY AND COAST GUARD AND THE BDF ARE:

1. MONITOR BDF DEVELOPMENT CONTINUING TO ENCOURAGE CLOSE COOPERATION, AND PROVIDING INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND TRAINING AS NECESSARY AND WHEN AVAILABLE.

2. CONSIDER ASSISTING THE BDF IN DEVELOPING ITS AIR WING CAPABILITY, MUCH AS THE UK IS CURRENTLY ASSISTING WITH DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFLOAT CAPABILITY. RAPID DEVELOPMENT BY THE BDF OF CAPABILITIES COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF THE USCG IS DEFINITELY IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH COUNTRIES, SINCE THE USCG NOW PROVIDES EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE BAHAMAS - AT CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE.

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D. AS NOTED ABOVE THE BDF IS CURRENTLY BEING ORGANIZED TO FUNCTION ALONG THE SAME LINES AS THE USCG. IN THIS REGARD, INITIAL CONTACT HAS BEEN MADE BETWEEN USCG AND THE BDF TO ENSURE COMPATABILITY OF CAPABILITIES, AND EFFECTIVE COOPERATION WITH USCG. GIVEN THE FACT OF THE EXTENSIVE USE OF BAHAMIAN AIR AND SEA SPACE BY AMERICAN CITIZENS BOTH LEGITIMATELY AND OTHERWISE, CONTINUED AND, INDEED, EXPANDED COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IN ALL CATEGORIES MENTIONED IN PARAGRAPH D OF REFTEL IS DEFINITELY IN THE INTEREST OF USG.

E. PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS, ATTENDANCE AT US MILITARY SCHOOLS, ETC., CAN PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN SERVING BROAD AND LONG TERM US INTERESTS. THESE EFFORTS WOULD ENCOURAGE CONTINUED COOPERATION WITH USCG, USN, AND USAF IN MAINTAINING OUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN THE BAHAMAS, NOT TO MENTION THE ACTIVITIES OF DEA, US CUSTOMS, AND VARIOUS OTHER US AGENCIES. FURTHER, SINCE THE BAHAMAS IS OUR CLOSEST NON CONTIGUOUS NEIGHBOR, A STABLE BAHAMAS AND A SOUND AND CAPABLE BDF ARE DEFINITELY IN THE INTEREST OF USG. BDF INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAMS MENTIONED WOULD PLEASE THE BAHAMIANS, WHO HAVE LONG FELT THAT THEIR CLOSE PROXIMITY AND ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT WITH US ENTITLED THEM TO MORE ATTENTION AND

ASSISTANCE FROM USG.

F. SINCE NO GROUND FORCE CAPABILITY FOR THE BDF IS ENVISIONED
FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS, LITTLE ARMS EXPANSION WILL BE REQUIRED
EXCEPT FOR ADDITIONAL FIXED LIGHT WEAPONS ON THE NEW BOATS.
ANY ARMS REQUIRED WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO BE PROVIDED BY UK,
AND THE COSTS INVOLVED ARE MINIMAL.
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